When people of the present writer's age die there may be regrets, but there is never the poignant feeling of unfulfilment that comes with the death of a younger man—shorn of the years in which to express himself fully and to deploy his gifts to

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the utmost. The death of Sir Hugh Cairns is as sad a happening as could well be. It is not merely sad in the sense that we have lost from our midst a man whose company delighted us, but sad because British surgery has lost one of its most arresting figures so early, before he had given to the world what he had in store.

He had of course already accomplished so much that it is hard to know where to begin in writing about him, and in fact it would be possible to tell his story in several different ways, all of them correct. The young and handsome Australian from Adelaide, recently a Rhodes Scholar, who first made his mark at the London Hospital in the mid-nineteen-twenties had in 15 years become a national and almost as quickly an international figure. Hugh Cairns's influence was founded on the fact that he was supremely good at his work. He had a well-balanced and critical mind, but, critical though he was, he could be outstandingly generous in his appreciation of good qualities in others where he could perceive them. Thinking of him now and making this too-early judgment of him, one sees that it was remarkable that anyone should have combined all his gifts. I knew no one better as a surgeon, and scarcely anyone anywhere as good. I do not mean that he was brilliant to watch in the operating theatre, but that he gave the onlookers such confidence. As with Harvey Cushing, the utmost care had so obviously been taken in the working up of the case. Hugh Cairns demanded a very high level of performance from everyone associated with him. Some of his pupils have become leaders in neurosurgery in foreign lands.

Cairns prided himself on being "a good doctor." This lesson he had been taught by Harvey Cushing, who had it from Sir William Osler. Cushing used to say that you could tell whether a man was a good surgeon by noticing whether he personally saw that his patients were comfortable and was not too high-and-mighty to arrange their pillows. Hugh Cairns was fond of repeating this. It is not so small a thing as it sounds. It would be hard to say whether Harvey Cushing had a favourite above all others among his pupils, but certainly Cushing liked and admired no one more, recognizing the fibre in him. Cairns had a year in Boston as a Rockefeller Fellow in 1926-7, when he had already been appointed to the London Hospital. He had been a Rhodes Scholar at Balliol, a college that he loved, and where, to his pride, he was elected to a Fellowship in 1937. When he came back from the United States in 1927 he was resolved to devote himself entirely to neurosurgery, and, since no one had yet done that, many advised against it. However, his expert knowledge and his easy manners quickly triumphed.

He was well integrated as a person. I remember once making some remark about normality to Cairns, who replied that he thought that he himself was very normal. This estimate of himself was quite true. He was as normal a person as one could hope to know, so stable was he, so even tempered, so free from moods. But underneath he was a high-powered individual with immense ambitions to make his work and all about him as nearly perfect as he could. This he did by his own innate qualities and by collecting to him the best people he could find. This laid him open sometimes to criticism, for if he wanted something he usually got it. I never really found out whether he realized always that others saw easily through some of his schemes. He was not so simple as he thought he was. But he was simple in this, that he had a simple standard—perfection. Surely, he thought, no one can object to that. Nor can they. Rather of a piece was Hugh Cairns's estimate of his own ability. During the 25 years that we knew one other he said to me several times, "You know, I don't think I'm clever; I'm quite ordinary really." That again was true in a way. But Hugh Cairns's ordinariness was another man's excellence. He had in fact plenty of imagina-